You and Me (5 Times)

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/54574000.

Rating:
Teen And Up Audiences

Archive Warning:
Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Category:
M/M

Fandom:
Masters of the Air (TV 2024)

Relationship:
Gale "Buck" Cleven/John Clarence "Bucky" Egan

Characters:
Gale "Buck" Cleven, John Clarence "Bucky" Egan, Curtis Biddick, Harry Crosby, Robert "Rosie" Rosenthal, Ensemble Cast - Character

Additional Tags:
Friends to Lovers, Falling In Love, Gale pov, Opposites Attract, 5 Times, First Time, First Kiss, Mistaken for Being in a Relationship, Teasing, Tenderness, Mutual Pining, Pining, I wrote this in 2 hours, Fluff

Language:
English

Stats:
Published: 2024-03-19 Words: 4,135 Chapters: 1/1

You and Me (5 Times)

by stopstopstopit

Summary

Still, they've developed a camaraderie, a closeness, practically their own language, in their years together, and it confuses the hell out of everyone else. As others constantly point out, Buck and Bucky are just about as opposite as can be. Everyone always wants to know how they get along, how they can be friends, what makes them stick together.

But what else can he say?

Opposites attract.

Or, 5 times a joke is made that Buck and Bucky are married.

Notes

Just want to give a disclaimer that the show is based on real people, and this fic is based on the fictional version of events.

1.

Gale can't remember the last time he's felt so excited. He doesn't let it show; keeps it to himself as he does with most things, taking his emotions in stride and filtering them through a calm mask as always.

But internally? He's buzzing.

His hands are strong and true as they brace atop the pilot controls, though it feels all too much like they're shaking, trembling in anticipation.

Today, in mere moments, really, he and his men are set to touch down at the air base, to glide their fort down on newly polished wings and deboard down to their new home.

Gale can feel the excitement in the air, the crew all laughing and joking even more than normal as the runway comes in sight. Someone picks up Meatball to let him look out the window too, a high pitched voice only reserved for animals and babies garbling through the comms, "that's your new yard, Meatball!"

Like the others, Gale can't wait to get started. To begin flying real missions, get out there and make a difference.

But his real, honest to God anticipation has nothing to do with missions and bombs and wings.

It has everything to do with a certain John Egan, who, no doubt, is waiting for him on the ground.

A thrill runs through him at the thought of seeing his best friend, even after only being separated for a few weeks. Three whole weeks, to be precise, perhaps the longest amount of time they'd been apart since meeting that fated day in training.

He's spent more time with John now than perhaps anyone he's ever known, save for his father, but dwelling on the present is much better than the past.

Gale has been in love with Bucky for…God, he can't even pinpoint how long it has been. All he knows is that one day it happened, he'd realized it was true, but looking back he can't remember *not* loving John.

Not that Bucky knows that, of course. Gale is a master at holding things close to his chest, and this secret, out of all of them, is zipped up tight under his leather bomber, tucked away close to his heart.

Still, they've developed a camaraderie, a closeness, practically their own language, in their years together, and it confuses the hell out of everyone else. As others constantly point out, Buck and Bucky are just about as opposite as can be. Everyone always wants to know how they get along, how they can be friends, what makes them stick together.

But what else can he say?

Opposites attract.

"You're quiet, Major," Claytor observes from his copilot's seat, "not as excited as the rest of us?"

"When have you ever known the Major to look excited?" Lorch's teasing crackles through the comms, a few chuckles following.

"Oh he's excited alright," Gale can practically hear the grin in Amison's voice, "excited to get home to the wife."

More cackles all around.

"You married, Major?" Quinn pipes up from the belly of the plane, "might be a while before you can see-"

"No he ain't really married, not like that," Amison snickers but doesn't elaborate.

Gale just shifts the toothpick in his mouth in response, blinks slowly, and lets out a controlled breath.

"Haven't you heard this fella and Major Egan are attached at the hip?" DeMarco finally clarifies, a catcall coming from somewhere down below.

Whatever cacophony of teasing and prodding Buck is sure to receive from the whole squad never comes, as the control tower technicians suddenly take over their radio chatter.

"Clear to land," is all Gale needs to hear before he brings Alice down for a smooth, clean arrival.

He lets his crew file out one by one, the sounds of joyous laughter echoing around the fort as booted feet hit English soil. Buck remains

in the cockpit for just a moment, taking in his surroundings and keeping watch over his men.

Or perhaps keeping watch for something else, *someone* else, entirely.

A nearby jeep catches his eye, speeding towards his fort at surprising speed. He is too high up to make out any details, but the swatch of black hair and bright white teeth he is sure he could see at ten thousand feet are a dead giveaway for the driver.

Bucky.

John.

Gale feels a tension he didn't even know was there release in his chest, the earlier buzzing of his muscles now replaced with a strange sense of serenity.

He finally wills his muscles into moving, methodically running through his post-flight checklist before grabbing his own gear.

"Where is that handsome bastard? I know he's in there," Bucky's voice reverberates off the tarmac and into the plane, and Gale can't help the fond smile that pulls at his lips, where no one else can see.

He schools his features, adjusting his cap before finally vaulting down to the ground where a cool breeze brushes his cheeks.

"Are your ears burning, Major?" He can hear DeMarco ask.

"You all talkin' about me?" Bucky finally comes into view. He is grinning that lazy grin of his, hands on his slender hips as he converses with DeMarco, but the second Gale moves out from under the aircraft John spots him.

He doesn't move though, doesn't run to Buck immediately, throw his arms around him or anything of the sort.

Instead he just looks, eyes soft and fond, moving to focus on DeMarco as he speaks, but only for a moment before his gaze flits back to Buck, something private and knowing there.

"Just explainin' to the new recruits that your man's already taken," Benny wiggles his eyebrows as Gale comes abreast of him and John just lets out a guffaw in answer.

"Got a girl back home," Bucky agrees, but the look in his eyes tells

Gale he knows what they're talking about.

"You two will never make sense to me," Benny laughs, shaking his head before bending over and giving Meatball an affectionate pet, "let's go boy."

"Did ya miss me?" John finally says as DeMarco walks away, holding out a big hand for Gale to shake.

More than you know, Buck wants to say; wants to grab that hand and yank the man forward, into his space, into his arms, and demonstrate just how much.

"Like a stone in my shoe," he lies, and they both know it, before he grabs Bucky's hand in a tight grip and gives it a firm shake.

Bucky launches into explanations about the equipment shortage and the mud and the Brits, and Gale listens, of course he does, but he can feel his body relaxing, giving in to the somehow grounding presence of his best friend, who to anyone else is be anything but calming.

They sit down in the front seat of John's jeep, arms pressed together, and Gale lets out another sigh.

He's made it. They've made it. To England. To the war.

Together.

2.

John is tipsy and when he's tipsy he gets affectionate which somehow, Buck guesses, translates in his big head to, "touch everyone."

Not everyone though, just a certain few, those he knows and trusts, like Curt and Bubbles and Cros.

But the person he trusts above everyone else, who he can read like a book even when others believe it's damn near impossible, is Buck.

And boy, has he been touchy with Buck tonight.

They're at the pub, all squeezed in like sardines in the hazy, smoky bar, chairs pushed together to take up any available room. Gale is parked next to Curt, who is currently arguing with the recently introduced RAF pilots about some nonsense, most likely how he can't

understand half of the words they're saying.

John is making the rounds like he always does, never wanting to miss out on a single moment, as if he can be everywhere all at once. He has one homing beacon, though, and that's Gale.

He's been swooping back to their table all night, either sitting down or just standing and hovering, usually with one or both arms plastered to Gale's person in some way, even if his attention is placed elsewhere.

It's maddening as it always is, having John's hands on him. It's comforting and enthralling at the same time, and Buck can never decide if he wants to throw the touch away, for his own sanity if not for appearances sake, or to yank the man down towards him and tell him where he should *really* put his hands.

In the end he does neither, just sits still and poised as he always does, letting the constant chatter of the room, largely produced by his best friend, wash over him.

Bucky finally manifests back at their table, choosing to sit this time before he raises a hand in the air, only to slap it down on Buck's thigh, giving it a tight squeeze.

None of the squad seems to even take notice, they're probably far too used to it by now, as Bubbles and Claytor argue about something unimportant and Crosby drops off drinks, palming a ginger beer into Buck's hand.

Who does take notice, though, is the RAF pilots. They've been shooting him looks all night, foreheads and eyebrows crinkled as if trying to parse him out. The looks only get more annoyed, darker, when Bucky makes an appearance.

"Do you have a girl back home, Major?"

Buck blinks out of his reverie and focuses on the RAF pilot who's asked the question. Apparently the conversation he wasn't listening to had to do with sweethearts.

He takes a sip of his ginger beer, taking his time like always before he answers, but Bucky beats him to the punch.

"Yeah, he's got a real looker back home, don't ya, Buck?" The hand on his thigh snakes its way up to hook a few fingers under the knot in Gale's tie, leveraging it to the side to bring him closer into Bucky's

space. John smacks a sloppy kiss right below his cheekbone and the boys roar in laughter.

The RAF pilots are not laughing.

“And does your lady know that you already have a wife?” One of them asks with that pompous accent.

All eyes swivel to the Brits, unimpressed, as John’s hand smooths down Gale’s tie.

“Hey, that’s my joke to make,” Curt interjects, curling his own arm around Gale’s neck so his hand lands on Bucky’s shoulder. Buck supposes it’s to show that they’re all close, relationally and physically, but now he can move even less than before, and those damn British bastards are still staring him down.

“‘Sides, the only thing that really gets the Major excited is baseball,” Curt finally slides back to his seat.

“Specifically Yankees,” John points an accusatory finger at the Brits, moving his hand away from Buck, who feels like he can breathe again.

“My *buddy* Buck here,” Gale’s sure the emphasis is purposeful, “he thinks they’re a waste of time, though, don’t ya?”

Whatever space Bucky had been trying to create with his words is quickly ruined as the man grabs Buck’s face, cradling his chin in one big hand and squishing his cheeks in a teasing way.

For a moment all Gale can do is stare, the echo of a smile pulling to his own lips despite himself. John really is something else.

He zones out of the conversation again as Curt tells the story about him, his focus solely directed on Bucky, even as the man isn’t looking at him. His hand is back on Gale’s thigh though, more subtly under the table this time, and his stomach swoops as the fingers slowly massage the muscles there.

“So, let me get this straight: You’re Buck and he’s Bucky?”

Gale tunes back in as eyes once again turn to him.

“Yeah,” John doesn’t elaborate as he squeezes Gale’s leg.

“Is there a shortage of nicknames in the 100th?” The Brits laugh at

their own joke, even as Curt rolls his eyes. They've all heard this one before.

"No, just a shortage of crews," Bucky admits, too honest, and it sobers the table.

"Pity," finally breaks the silence.

"Pity, pity, pity," Bucky tenses beside Gale. The hairs on the back of his neck stand up as the mood shifts in the room, and Gale just knows something is about to go down.

"Pity what?"

"I said it's a pity. You would have more if you flew your missions at night."

"Now why'd you have to go and say something like that?" Bucky asks, nonchalant, and Buck knows he is anything but calm.

"Well perhaps I was getting bored of all of the heavy petty going on," the Brit nods towards Bucky, and just like that, it's on.

It's Curt that eventually takes on the fight, as Bucky slings an arm around Buck, nose right up next to Gale's cheek in a blatant show for their guests.

In the end, John carries Curt off as the champion, hoisted up with his arms in the air as Gale brings up the rear, watching.

He thinks back on the night, on every touch and hug and press of Bucky's hand. *That's just Bucky,* he tells himself. The touches don't mean anything and Buck still had his own dame back home, just like John had said, a girl he loved and wanted to marry.

Or at least, he thought he did.

But as he watches John walk away, looking back over his shoulder to shoot a crooked grin Buck's way, he knows he's been lying to himself.

3.

Contrary to what everyone now believes, John and Gale didn't always get along. In fact in the first few weeks of meeting, after John had given Gale a whole new name, poked and prodded and teased until he

pushed buttons Gale didn't even know he had, he was just about ready to ring the guy's neck.

And yet somehow, some way, Bucky always managed to crawl under his skin, to do something so ridiculous and annoying and ballsy, that all Buck was left to do was smile with a laugh and a shake of his head.

He didn't smile all that often, keeping his impassive mask tight on his face, but the hard surface had begun to crack, chipped away as if by John's very own hands.

John was everything Gale wasn't - impulsive and carefree and unashamed. Perhaps that is what drew Gale to him, all this time. He was everything Gale wasn't but sometimes, deep down, wished he could be.

Like now, as they stand together on the hot African sand, their forts in fraying shambles behind them, watching the sunset. Buck feels gutted, hollow and exhausted after their last mission. They've lost so many men.

"We're gonna get through this. Come on, don't you stop believing that," Bucky encourages, the smallest hint of a smile pulling one side of his mouth as he tries to cheer up Buck.

"Sure, Bucky," is all Buck can conjure in response. They're two sides of a coin, he and John. When one is down, the other is there to pick things up. He can only imagine what will happen if they're both down at the same time.

"Hey," Bucky soothes, his voice barely above a whisper, as hands land on Gale's life preserver, hooking into the straps as they guide Buck closer.

"Hey, we're gonna make it. What'd I tell ya? You 'n me, Buck."

Gale looks at the ground, scared of what will show on his face if his eyes meet John's right now. He sees his own hands, hanging loose at his sides, and wants more than anything to reach out and slide them into John's jacket, tuck them away to hide the tremors in his fingers.

Bucky steps somehow closer and their chests are only inches apart, heads bent together, but only touching where John's hands rest on the straps like they're lapels.

“John, I-“

“Sorry to interrupt, Majors,” Crosby is standing a few paces away, his own face pointed down as if not to notice this private moment.

“What is it, Cros?” Bucky asks, his grip loosening but not moving away.

“I, uh,” the navigator stutters as he raises his head, glancing between the two of them, “I was sent- uh, Kidd wants to know where we’re bunking down for the night.”

“He does, does he?” Bucky finally lets go, shifting his weight back as he crosses his arms. “Can’t just come ask us himself?”

“His actual words were, ‘tell Egan he’s had enough time with the missus’,” Cros sniggers, eyes darting to Buck who looks back towards the horizon, not in the mood for jokes.

“We all need some extra support, sometimes,” Bucky says, quieter, as an explanation for why he’s lingering and Buck can feel those blue eyes on him.

“I know more than anyone, sir,” Crosby seems to understand the situation and Gale turns to look at him, finding only an encouraging smile on the navigator’s face.

“C’mon, Buck, let’s go,” Bucky holds out an arm for Gale to walk into it, to slot his shoulders in the crook of it as if that’s where he belongs…

He acquiesces, wordlessly stepping under it as John’s hand rests on his shoulder and they fall into step with Crosby.

…Maybe it is.

4.

“John Egan, your two o’clock,” he can’t get the words out fast enough as he takes in the tall, wonderful, oh so familiar form of his best friend.

Bucky’s eyes snap to him immediately and Gale would wince in sympathy at the wounds on his face if he weren’t so damn happy to

see him.

“What took you so long?” He gets out before his throat seems to close up, adrenaline and excitement and *relief* flooding through him all at once. John stares back as he walks, their eyes locked for as long as possible, and Gale can see the same feelings reflected back in Bucky’s eyes.

He lingers for a while near the gate, processing everything that just happened. John is simultaneously the last person he wants here and the only person he wants to see. As much as he wishes his best friend were still back out beyond these walls, alive and well and free, they’re together now, Bucky and Buck, and that’s all that matters.

It takes hours for Bucky to get processed. He’s no doubt interrogated, and seen by a medic if he’s lucky. All Gale knows is that it is almost dark by the time he finds his way to the barracks.

Gale is sitting at the table inside, his knee bouncing up and down in an anxious way that he never would have allowed before this hell hole. He almost leaves several times to go and find John, wondering how he’ll even find the right place to go, but it seems he may very well be a beacon for the man, because just as the sun sets the door to the hut is opened and Bucky announces, “honey, I’m home.”

He promptly collapses after that and Buck practically flies over the table to get to him.

“Help me get him to his bunk,” he commands Murph, and they both get an arm hooked under each of John’s shoulders, hoisting him up as gently as possible.

“You saved m’ a bunk?” Bucky mumbles, all his adrenaline and energy spent. “You’re th’ best wife ever,” he manages to joke even in his condition, and all the other soldiers in the cabin titter in laughter.

They deposit him on the bed, Buck’s head bent close under the rafters as he gingerly lowers Bucky’s own head to the mattress.

“Seriously, I could kiss you right now,” he grins up at Gale as the Major leans over him to assess his injuries.

“Get some water and find me a cloth,” Buck instructs Murph and Crank who are hovering anxiously.

“You’re alive,” there’s a big hand suddenly cupping Gale’s face, and he

looks back to John whose own expression is so fond and loving and *tender* that an ache springs up in Gale's sternum.

"And you've seen better days," he quips back and maybe it's the swell of affection making him do crazy things, but he reaches up his own hand to run his knuckles across John's cheek bone, careful not to press on the bruises.

"Here," Crank is back with the water and Gale doesn't move his attention from John as he takes it.

"Gonna get you fixed up, my friend," he tacks on the less familiar address even as he all but caresses the wet cloth down John's face, wiping away the blood and dirt and grime.

"Knew you were still alive. Could feel it," John mumbles, his eyes closing as he lets out a sigh. Gale wouldn't be surprised if he passes out before his wounds are clean.

"You 'n me, Buck," he whispers, almost inaudible, and Gale knows he would do anything to protect this man, "you 'n me."

5.

"You heard me the first goddamn time, Gale," the voice that may be more familiar than his own croons over the comms and Gale thinks his heart may have stopped beating.

"Well, I'll be damned," he hears himself saying, turning to check Rosie's expression, see if he knew.

"Oh I knew," Rosenthal may be a mind reader, his grin practically glowing as he laughs in delight. "Wifey flew in this morning."

Gale can't even pretend to be upset at the joke, and matches his grin to Rosie's infectious one, rolling the gum around in his mouth and clamping down hard to suppress his utter excitement.

They touch down soon enough and Gale's focus is interrupted by a car beeping. He turns to look out the window and if he'd been walking he would've stopped dead in his tracks. John is here, driving right alongside, and he looks like he always has, cocksure and glorious.

"Look who it is," he says after a long moment of just staring, his grin

growing every second. “The stone in my shoe.” He means it with more affection than he can say.

“Honey, I’m home,” it’s his turn to say as he shakes John’s hand on the tarmac, only because it’s the appropriate amount of contact with the number of soldiers and civilians mulling about. Really all he’d rather do is sink into the man’s arms and never leave.

The day is an absolute blur after that, full of laughter and hugs and tears and drinks and friends.

Bucky’s hand never leaves Gale’s person for long, just like that night at the pub, all those months ago. They’re practically plastered together all night, though no one seems to mind, they all know by now that the Buck’s come in a pair.

By the end of the night it’s just him and John, sitting up on the control tower as Gale lets himself indulge in a drink for once, both of them taking long swigs from Bucky’s beloved flask.

They each have a hand in their own lap, with a hand hanging down between them, almost like magnets drawn together, but not quite touching just yet.

“Buck,” John whispers, looking up towards the sky as it lights up with flares.

“Bucky,” Gale whispers back, taking another drink.

The back of Bucky’s hand brushes against his, smooth and warm and strong. It brushes again, this time more of a press before finally, finally, John is reaching over and linking their fingers together.

“You ‘n me, Buck,” John says towards the sky.

“You ‘n me,” Gale repeats the words he’s now heard so many times, his eyes locking on the side of John’s face.

John finally looks at him then, his eyes dark and serious for once, though Gale can spot the softness within them.

The whole world seems to blur away in that moment as they lock eyes, just taking each other in. John barely inches forward and when Gale makes no move to pull away he does it again, and again, before time seems to slow and their faces are a hair’s breadth apart.

“Gale?” Bucky whispers, and still after all this time, his real name rolling off the man’s lips makes him shudder.

“I love you,” he murmurs back, answering an unasked question, and he’s never been so sure about anything in his life.

“Yeah,” is John’s only response, but it’s so him, and it somehow carries so much meaning and understanding *love* that it’s all Gale’s ever wanted to hear. Nothing’s ever felt so right.

Their lips meet in the lightest brush, before they meet over and over again, deeper and deeper each time. By the time the sun rises, they lay in each other’s arms, safe and warm and joyous.

Together.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!